Being and Health

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Preface

Many of my experiences growing up heavily involved my families' religious affiliations. I was raised primarily around the protestant church, in which a belief about God felt pushed onto me. I *had* to attend church every Sunday and I *had* to pray every mealtime and bedtime among other actions I felt I *had* to do. I found myself often questioning the belief. One particular time I had questioned my Sunday school teacher about Gods decision to kill the eldest child of a family if they did not put lambs' blood over their door. "Since I'm the oldest child of my family, would I have died if my parents did not put lambs' blood on their door?", I asked to which the reply was "yes", which to me seemed entirely unfair. Thus, after some encouragement from my schoolteachers, I started studying religion and philosophy to better understand why Christianity didn't seem fair. Quickly, I fell in love with the topic and decided to study it further at university where I came across Jean-Paul Sartre and his book *Being and Nothingness*. As I'm sure anyone could have predicted, Sartre's concept of absolute freedom struck me greatly, with much of his philosophy speaking to the experiences I had had in life, especially that surrounding religion. I quickly became an avid follower and, to my mind, nothing else came close. Most appealing to me was the sense of responsibility that Sartre's philosophy insists on every individual being, regardless of the circumstances they find themselves. This dedication to Sartre and his philosophy only grew after reading Simone De Beauvoir and Franz Fanon, who's account of race and sex made me understand the struggles minority groups face within society, something I had previously misunderstood.

However, upon completing my studies I began working in a care home with a specialized unit in dementia. One resident there, who I will call resident X, was late in the progression of their dementia presenting many of the very common symptoms including loss of memory, loss of motor control and loss of reasoning skills. One day resident X was disturbing other residents during lunch, some of whom were becoming increasingly aggressive

in their behaviour. To resolve the issue, I took resident X for a walk up and down the corridor while the others ate their food. Afterwards I took them to their bedroom to eat their food in peace, to which they asked me to stay. I had other duties I needed to attend to, so declined. Angered, resident X proceeded to push me into their bathroom and close the door, gripping it tightly from the outside preventing me from leaving. The actions of resident X were erratic, and completely out of character, something common to sufferers of dementia. Combine this experience with the coronavirus pandemic and my recent diagnosis of ADHD, the concept of health became relentlessly present in my life. This has made me question Sartre's absolute freedom with one question; how can one be *absolutely* free to make choices about their actions when their physical body experiences illness? Thus, this thesis will develop this concern and come to critique Sartre's concept of *absolute* freedom.

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Introduction

In 1943, Jean-Paul Sartre released his book Being and Nothingness. In it he presented a theory of absolute freedom that resulted in his claims about bad faith and authenticity. This thesis will start with a deep analysis into his theory, deducing what exactly he means when he calls us absolutely free and how he is able to defend this claim against criticisms from fellow philosopher Merleau-Ponty. Despite my admiration for the theory, I will come to criticize it, suggesting that when the cellular functioning of the body is inhibited, we are not absolutely free. I will begin my argument by addressing the empirical evidence and then I will present a case study in dementia before finally critiquing Sartre's own example of the Sadist and the tortured Other.

However, despite my critiques I do not wish to abandon Sartre's theory entirely. Intuitively, there remains value in his ability to weed out acts of unfreedom, that is, when individuals deny the responsibility of their actions instead pushing the blame (or praise) onto forces out of their control. This is what he comes to call bad faith. The second part of this thesis, then, will seek to adapt Sartre's theory of freedom with concepts of health. The reason for introducing health here stems from my criticisms that one is not free when their bodies cellular functions are restricted. However, I will argue that current definitions of health are inadequate and will first need to find my own definition of health. Using that definition, I will then approach my criticisms to Sartre again, showing that we can adapt Sartre's theory of health to maintain its value without claiming that we are absolutely free beings.

1 What is Being?

1.1: Existence Precedes Essence

In 'Existentialism is a Humanism' Sartre begins by explaining existentialism as a doctrine, one that both makes sense of human life and affirms that every truth and action imply an environment and a human subjectivity.[1] He says; *"Existence comes before essence – or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective"*.[2] Sartre explains this further, using the example of a paper-knife. A paper-knife has a pre-built essence, it is made for a reason, a definitive purpose. Its essence precedes its existence. If God were to exist, then human beings would be the same as the paper knife, for God makes man in his image, that is, our essence precedes our existence. Sartre, like many, does not believe in God. Yet, despite the decline in belief of God in the eighteenth century, the idea that essence precedes existence in human beings was not questioned. There has still been a continued belief in a set human nature.[3] Sartre challenged this, claiming that "if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence", and this he attributes to man, as his predecessor Heidegger did.[4] We can then derive that what *existence precedes essence* truly means is that man first of all exists, then encounters himself, and then defines himself after this encounter. Man is "*not what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills… Man is nothing else but that which he makes himself. That is the first principle of existentialism".*[5] Sartre's claim is that human beings have no in-built human nature, "no innate or fixed personality", but instead each individual creates their own purpose through values and projects which they choose.[6] Sartre argues that before all else, man is something which projects

[1] Sartre J.-P., Existentialism is a Humanism, 1946, Pg. 346
[2] Ibid, Pg. 348
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid, Pg. 349. It's worth noting that this was Sartre's conception of Heidegger and not taken directly from Heidegger's work.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Webber, Rethinking Existentialism, 2018, Pg. 3

itself towards a future. Crucially, he claims *"Before that projection of the self, nothing exists… man will only attain existence when he is what he purposes to be".*[7] The individual's purpose, as previously noted, is only created after man has encountered himself and set his own purpose. What Sartre means by this is that existence precedes essence, but we can only recognise our existence when we project ourselves into chosen purposes that aren't fixed to any predetermined nature of being human.

1.2: Being

The structure of human beings, according to Sartre, consists of two aspects the being-in-itself and the being-for-itself. The in-itself is the realm of being that exists without consciousness, one which consist only of matter. This table to which I am sitting is an in-itself for it exists without a consciousness; it is a thing, an object. The table is not able to negate or transcend itself beyond what it is. It cannot be what it is not, it simply is what it is.[8] The for-itself, by contrast, is the realm of conscious being which is "what it is not and is not what it is".[9] Sartre describes an 'absolute event' that occurs, almost without reason, that creates the for-itself. The human being (perhaps the term *Dasein* is more appropriate) consists of both an in-itself and a for-itself which is what separates it from objects, which consist only of a being-in-itself.[10]

When applying this concept of Being specifically to *Dasein*, we can establish a divide between our facticity and our transcendence. Facticity is our being-in-itself, referring to the facts about our being-within-the-world. It is a fact of my being that I was born in the United Kingdom,

[7] Sartre J. P., 1946, Pg. 349
[8] Sartre J. P., Being and Nothingness, 1943, Pg. 22
[9] Ibid, Pg. 124
[10] The Heideggerian term *Dasein* will refer to any Being that has both an in-itself and a for-itself. The reason for this is because I do not want to limit this kind of Being to only Human Beings. Using the term *Dasein* will therefore allow me to be much broader in my discussion and incorporate other Beings that possess a for-itself and in-itself.

with certain physical traits, with a specific past, etc. What is a fact about our in-itself means it is what it is presently; the matter of things, my past and the way people perceive me. It is not up to us how these things are, they just are. Transcendence on the other hand refers to my ability to negate my facticity to open myself up to what I am not and also what the world is not. It is projecting oneself beyond one's facticity and establishing what one is not. Transcendence allows our for-itself to project itself into future possibilities, whereas facticity exists only in the past and the present. The future presented to the for-itself is one of infinite possibilities of what it is not; "I am an infinity of possibilities, for the meaning of the for-itself is complex and cannot be contained in one formula" unlike the in-itself, which is what it is.[11] This will be the origin of Sartre's argument that we are absolutely free Beings because we are absolutely free to introspect our facticity and use our conclusions of that introspection to act within our present situations. Before coming to understand freedom, however, we must first understand Sartre's notion of nihilation.

1.3: Nihilation

Nihilation, or to nihilate, is the act of the consciousness to negate the way that the world is presented to it. Therefore, through the for-itself, we are able to negate the world as it is presented to us. We do this because only once we have nihilated the world can we then choose how to constitute our perspective of it. In this sense, the for-itself exists as the foundation of its own being because it must first exist in order to nihilate. By nihilating the world, it establishes its existence as separate to the in-itself. This is why it is the for-itself that constitutes Being, because the in-itself is not capable of doing this. This is important if Sartre is to avoid determinism, that is, the in-itself will render us as merely objects within the world. Sartre holds this impossible because our for-itself has an infinite number of choices to choose from. We only become aware of

[11] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 152

the infinite nature of our for-itself, however, through nihilating ourselves because only once we have nihilated our in-itself can we recognise our for-itself is what it is not. It is separate from the in-itself, which simply is. The ability to nihilate is an attribute of the for-itself that clearly distinguishes it from the in-itself, which, as we will see in the following section, is what will constitute our absolute freedom.

Sartre's friend Pierre does not appear at the bar to meet Sartre like they had arranged. Pierre is absent from the bar, but his absence only exists because Sartre is at the bar and Pierre is not despite Sartre's expectation that Pierre would be there. If neither of them had showed up to the bar, then their absence from the bar would not arise as such, for it is only in one's experience that the other is absent that their absence from the bar becomes a part of reality. The absence as a brute fact is only constituted by the transcended for-itself that recognises it. In this case, Sartre only recognises absence because Pierre has not met him at the bar. The barman would not recognise this absence because the orientation of his for-itself did not include the planned agreement between Sartre and Pierre to meet at the bar. Thus, he apprehends the world differently than Sartre does because he has a different situation. In either case, the for-itself must first nihilate its situation to constitute its perspective of the world. Once it has done this the Dasein can then act within the world.

1.4: Absolute Freedom

The orientation of our nihilation is always directed towards something. In the Pierre example, the nihilation is directed towards an arrangement between Pierre and Sartre to meet at the bar. This arrangement is what Sartre would refer to as a freely chosen project, that is, he chose to organise a meeting with Pierre at the bar and it is that chosen project that directed his actions to go to the bar. Sartre holds that we are free because our for-itself is able to choose any

of an infinite number of projects presented to it by its nihilation which, in turn, will result in our actions within the world. But what about this freedom is *absolute*? Simply put, consciousness is absolutely free to nihilate itself, that is, to break down its situation revealing what it is not, which allows the consciousness to choose one of an infinite number of projects available to it. Even in one's attempt to avoid nihilating oneself one is committing to a choice not to nihilate themselves. To choose not to choose is still a choice. Every Being that possesses a consciousness is only limited by its own freedom unlike our in-itself which is stuck in its brute facts. Our in-itself cannot choose anything because it is what it is, and so it cannot nihilate itself. In this sense, the for-itself is "condemned to be free".[12] Let us take a deep look at Sartre's example of the climber and the crag;

> *I am at the foot of this crag which appears to me as not-scalable. This means that the rock appears to me in the light of a project scaling… Thus the rock stands out on the background-world by the initial choice of my freedom. But on the other hand, what my freedom cannot determine is whether the rock to be scaled will or will not lend itself to scaling. This is part of the brute being of the rock. Nevertheless, the rock can only show its resistance to the scaling only if the rock is integrated by freedom in a situation of which the general theme is scaling. For the simple traveller who passes over this road and whose free project is a pure aesthetic… the crag is not revealed as scalable or not-scalable. It is manifested only as beautiful or ugly… The given in-itself as resistance or as aid is revealed only in the light of projecting freedom… therefore it is only through the free upsurge of freedom that the world develops and reveals the resistance that can render the projected end as unrealizable. Man encounters an obstacle only with the field of his own freedom."* Being and Nothingness, Pg. 509-510

In this example, Sartre shows that our facticity cannot restrict our freedom, for something is only defined by our freely chosen projects that constitute the field in which we view a brute thing. That is not to say that there is not a brute in-itself confronting us but that this in-itself has

[12] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 152

no determining characteristic until I give it one.[13] The crag is not something to be scaled until I freely constitute it as a thing that can or cannot be scaled. That is why the traveller has a different perspective of the crag as something beautiful or ugly because their freely chosen projects are one of aesthetics, not an individual's ability to climb it. Therefore, one is free to choose projects that will orientate their nihilation of the world. This is absolute freedom because nothing can constrain the orientation of nihilation one chooses. Importantly, this does not mean that consciousness is free to perceive what it wants, it is limited by what actually is, but ones attitude to what *is* is absolutely unrestrained. For example, it is raining, and I cannot nihilate the rain away. I can, however, choose to welcome it, wish it away, bless it, embrace it, etc.

Sartre did not escape criticism about his view of absolute freedom. Merleau-Ponty spoke out against him in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. He directly criticises Sartre's example of the crag claiming that the world is not constituted through our freedom, our freedom does not draw a particular outline of the obstacle in front of us but rather lays down its general structures.[14] This means that the crag exists both as beautiful or ugly, and as scalable or not-scalable. It is not one or the other but both, regardless of how we choose to constitute it. Regardless of how our freedom constitutes the crag, it can only appear to us through a medium that lends itself to the crag's fundamental qualities.[15] If the crag is made of sandstone, our freedom can never constitute it as something other than sandstone, such as quartz for example. Using Merleau-Ponty's example, a piece of wood is not constituted by its collection of colours and tactile data but as something that emanates a woody essence.[16] I don't think this criticism is a very strong one, as it misinterprets Sartre's argument. Sartre would agree with Merleau-Ponty's point, that the brute existence of the crag or the log emanates a particular essence. The crag and the log are a part of being-in-itself, they have an

[13] Compton, Sartre Merleau-Ponty and human freedom, 1982, Pg. 581
[14] Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, 1962, Pg. 439
[15] Ibid, Pg. 450
[16] Ibid.

essence that defines them as things and not as thinking beings. This is problematic for Merleau-Ponty as it does not disprove Sartre's understanding of absolute freedom because Sartre can still hold that one's for-itself is absolutely free. The crag may be beautiful, but my for-itself will never recognise it as so if it does not first choose the project of aesthetics. The beauty of the crag only exists as a nothingness that is constituted by the for-itself which is absolutely free to constitute the crag as it pleases. Beauty is not part of the crag's natural essence, but it is part of the for-itself's absolute free choice to constitute it as beautiful. The for-itself cannot choose the essence of the crag, its in-itself, but it can constitute its perspective of the crags being-within-the-world, as beautiful or scalable etc. This is the same as my example of the rain. I cannot nihilate the rain into what it is not, but I can choose how to constitute my perspective of it.

A stronger argument for Merleau-Ponty is his referral to an individual's history and culture. It is true that Sartre does not hold a person's history or culture to be important to their individual absolute freedoms for they are a part of an individual's past, that is, their in-itself which, as we know, does not define a person's for-itself. Merleau-Ponty disputes this extreme subjectivism suggesting that "I am a psychological and historical structure, and have received with existence a manner of existing, a style".[17] That is, our for-itself is often determined by the situation we are raised in. Our extraneous traits will motivate and impact our deliberations, we cannot just escape from them. When motives are strong enough to incline me towards a particular action, my freedom is removed and, therefore, not absolute.[18] The defence for Sartre here, can be found through his compatriot Simone De Beauvoir in an article named 'Merleau-Ponty and Pseudo-Sartianism'. The article is a defence of Sartre against the charges of extreme subjectivism in which Beauvoir suggests that our consciousness is not entirely in control of the way in which our perception of the world is altered by our

[17] Merleau-Ponty, 1962, Pg. 455
[18] Ibid, Pg. 435.

experience.[19] Sartre, she argues, never commits to claiming that our history or culture has no impact on our deliberations, only that we are free to constitute history or culture how we choose to constitute it. Say I am born in a neighbourhood with high crime rates, this will impact my deliberations as to whether its safe to go out at night or not, but it will not impact my overall freedom to choose whether to actually go out or not to go out. I still freely choose to go out or to not go out, I am never forced to do one or the other. There is place for arguing that an individual has the right to deliberate the options presented to them free of any historical or cultural factors and this is discussed in great detail by Beauvoir and Fanon, notably in their works 'the Second Sex' and 'Black Skin White Masks' respectively. However, regardless of historical and social restrictions that may impact a person's *practical* freedom within the world, they are still absolutely *ontologically* free in their consciousness. That is, they are still absolutely free to think whatever they want. This is freedom of thought, not practical freedom to act.[20]

Let us look at Sartre's example of the sadist who tortures the Other. For the sadist, torturing the Other is manifesting their freedom in their flesh in the hopes of retrieving something from them. In this example Sartre claims that a person's practical freedom is clearly obstructed, they are chained and captured and cannot control the environment they are in. But the facticity of the Other merely "hides freedom".[21] The sadist aims to use the flesh of the Other as an instrument for their own gain and the sadist does this to make the flesh of the Other appear to the Other. "But let us not be deceived here", Sartre says, for what the sadist is really trying to accomplish is to obstruct the Other's freedom into forcing them to make a decision, the freedom is there in that flesh and the sadist hopes to root it out.[22] But the pain

[19] Gray, Beauvoir contra Merleau-Ponty, 2006-2007, Pg. 78
[20] This is deeply reminiscent of Epictetus work in the Enchiridion. He states; "The things in our control are by nature free, unrestrained, unhinders [The for-itself]; but those not in our control are weak, slavish, restrained, belonging to others [The in-itself]". Epictetus, 1750, Pg. 1
[21] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 424
[22] Ibid, Pg. 424-425

the Other can withstand is not determined by their body or the sadist, but rather themselves. The Other "determines" for themselves the moment the pain becomes unbearable, thus they are entirely responsible for the pain they are receiving.[23] That is, the Other's being-in-itself, their facticity, is clearly restricted practically. However, their for-itself remains ontologically free to constitute the pain they are receiving however they want. The Other only experiences the pain caused by the sadist through an upsurge of freedom that has no obstacle in the absolute sense.[24] The rock will not be an obstacle if I wish to reach the top of the mountain at any cost, and the red-hot pincers of the torturer do not exempt us from being free.[25] This does not mean that it is possible to overcome all obstacles, but we are nonetheless absolutely free to choose a project that constitute our obstacles. The impossibility of a project comes to be by our free choice to renounce that project in light of a more fundamental project; the Other being tortured by the Sadist may hold the information they have to be of high importance, but ultimately would sacrifice it for the benefit of their life, which is a more fundamental project than holding the important information.[26] An individual who denies this absolute freedom of the for-itself defines themselves wholly as an in-itself or wholly as a for-itself, that is, defining themselves only by their facticity or their transcendence rather than as the two together. This is the realm of bad faith.

1.5: Bad Faith and Authenticity

Bad faith appears in two separate forms, the denial of one's transcendence and the denial of one's facticity. It is the double aspect of the in-itself and the for-itself, their unity, that comes to constitute the conditions of bad faith for bad faith is the denial of one of these

[23] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 425
[24] Ibid, Pg. 510
[25] Ibid, Pg. 527
[26] Ibid.

modes of being, and a full commitment to the other. That is, if one wholly aligns oneself to one's facticity, denying one's transcendence, they deny one's absolute freedom to choose one of the infinite number of possibilities presented to them. If one wholly aligns oneself to one's transcendence, denying one's facticity, they deny attention to the truth of the situation they are in preferring to pretend that what is happening is in fact not happening. The two forms of bad faith can be explained through a series of examples presented by Sartre.

Before discussing the examples however, it should be clarified that bad faith is not the same as self-deception despite certain translations of Being and Nothingness translating bad faith as self-deception. In the general use of the term, self-deception is believing that P under the influence and desire that P be the case ignoring available evidence that would in fact suggest ~P.[27] Bad faith certainly can include self-deception, but it is not limited to only self-deception. This is because self-deception results in a paradox, that is, in order for the self-deceiver to be a deceiver they must know the truth and the one being deceived must not, so how can one self-deceive when they know it's a deception from the truth? Bad faith is not subject to this paradox, for bad faith does not require the individual to know the truth, as self-deception does. Bad faith can also be a willing choice to avoid investigating the truth for fear of what the answer may be. For example, one's avoidance of their facticity may not be because they know the truth of their facticity, but they refuse to examine it in an attempt to disarm its significance. Take a breathless person, for example, they know that something is wrong, but tell themselves it's fine, it will go away, they don't need to see a doctor. Here the individual is not self-deceiving themselves because they do not know the truth behind what's causing their breathlessness. They are however in bad faith, for they are attempting to deny that those breathing problems will impact their Being.

[27] Galeotti, Political self deception, 2018, Pg. 19

Let's look at Sartre's example of the woman on a date with a man. The woman has consented to go out with a man for the first time, and she knows of the man's sexual intentions towards her. Further, she knows that sooner or later there will come a time she has to make a decision about how to react towards the man's intentions, but, for the time being, she concerns herself only with what is respectful and discreet in her partners attitude in an attempt to postpone the moment of her decision as long as possible.[28] When the man says to her "I find you so attractive" she disarms the compliment of its sexual background and attaches it instead to the immediate meanings of the phrase, that is, she takes the man's compliment simply as that, and not as the sexual advancement the man intends it to be. Due to this disarmament, the man appears to be sincere in his compliment, which satisfies the woman and delays her inevitable decision. In this example, the woman is rejecting the facticity of the situation, constituting the man's actions as wholly genuine and not as they actually are. This is why the woman is in bad faith.

The example also serves as an example of the second mode of bad faith, denying one's transcendence within a situation. The man here is choosing to view the woman not as a transcendent being but only as an object, a thing for him to pleasure and that will pleasure him in return. He seeks the challenge which she presents and not the individual for-itself that she possess. Therefore, the man is also in bad faith because he denies the woman's transcendence. Both the individuals here have attempted to establish identity while preserving their differences and in doing so one affirms the others facticity as being transcendent, and the other affirms transcendence as being facticity.[29]

One might say then, that to avoid bad faith one must be sincere. But this too would be a mistake, for the sincere person also commits to bad faith. This is because the 'Champion of

[28] Sartre J. P., Self-deception and falsehood, 1953, Pg. 250-251
[29] Ibid, Pg. 252

Sincerity', as Sartre calls them, is seeking to affirm their Being, to define what they are. This, however, causes the sincere person to demand that they constitute themselves as something that they are, rather than what they are not. By defining themselves as a thing that they are, the sincere person commits to a facticity, denying their transcendence as absolutely free beings with infinite possibilities. That is not to say all people who are sincere are living in bad faith. One the contrary, one can claim that they were a certain thing in the past, for it is a fact that in one's past they were a certain thing. However, they cannot make a sincerity claim about their future. For example, to say that 'I am a jealous person' supposes that there will be moments in my future where I will be jealous. This would be a sincerity claim made in bad faith for I am attributing jealously to an innate part of my Being and not as one of my infinite choices. Instead, the sincere person in 'good faith', as it were, would be able to justly claim 'I used to be a jealous person'. From here, the person can become pro-active in their future while not denying the facticity of their past.

If sincerity is not the opposite of bad faith, then, one asks what is? Sartre's answer is authenticity. To be authentic is to be make oneself known to the Other in a way that reveals their being-with-others. That is, I recognize what I am not in a crowd of other personalities. I realise my own uniqueness in the crowd of the Other by determining what qualities we share and realising what qualities we do not. In this sense, authenticity is the recognition of what you are not, which you discover through being-with-others.[30] To be authentic, then, is to recognize, and become responsible for, our absolute freedom and this is done through being-with-others.

The last question to ask then is why do individuals engage in bad faith? Galeotti talks about bad faith as self-deception but her conclusions as to why one self-deceives also applies to bad faith. That is, to self-deceive oneself is "functional to reducing the subject's anxiety and

[30] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 270

worries about P, at least temporarily".[31] This mention of anxiety is crucial, for one's anxiety, or 'angst' as Sartre calls it, is generated by ones realisation that they are absolutely free and therefore the responsibility for ones actions is wholly theirs. The feeling that one is completely responsible for their own actions regardless of their situation generates existential anxiety, and so, in an attempt to avoid this anxiety, an individual will act in bad faith to remove or shift some of the responsibility of their actions. This, as Sartre will come to argue in his ethics, may provide emotional stability in the short-term, but has "overall negative consequences, both for the subjects' doxastic states and the actions following from her irrational beliefs".[32]

Now that we understand the foundation of Sartre's arguments, we can move to analyse the argument and, as I will come to argue, suggest that Sartre is wrong in the claim that we are absolutely free.

[31] Galeotti, 2018, Pg. 20
[32] Ibid.

2 Constraints on Freedom

Thus far I have discussed Sartre's account of Being and absolute freedom and shown how it defends itself from criticisms made by Merleau-Ponty. However, as I stated in my introduction, I have come to question Sartre's concept of absolute freedom on the account that one does not appear to be free when their physical body constrains them. That is, Sartre argues the in-itself in no way constrains the for-itself, yet we can conceive of clear cases where it does (or intuitively suggests to), such as the case of dementia. As such, I will start this chapter with a case study in dementia and argue why the dementia sufferer is not absolutely free, even ontologically. I will then directly address *Being and Nothingness* revealing further problems, such as with Sartre's example of the sadist and the Other. I will summarise this chapter by suggesting that Sartre's claim that the *Dasein* is absolutely free is false and instead there are constraints on the for-itself determined by the body. However, I will summarise by acknowledging why Sartre's notion of freedom still has some value, and why it is important to maintain the theory, which will be my goal in later chapters.

Dementia is a general term used in medicine to describe specific symptoms including the decline of memory, reasoning or other thinking skills. About sixty to eighty percent of dementia cases are a result of Alzheimer's disease which is a specific brain disease that impacts the neurons and their connections to the brain, called synapses, inhibiting the neural pathways. The brain contains about one-hundred-trillion synapses that allow signals to travel rapidly through the brain creating the cellular basis of memories, thoughts, sensations, emotions, movements and skills.[33] I may refer to both dementia or Alzheimer's but, for the purposes of this thesis, both will refer to the degeneration of the brain resulting in symptoms such as the ones listed above. Some other symptoms of dementia include; memory loss, difficulty speaking, understanding and expressing thoughts, wandering often getting lost in familiar neighbourhoods, hallucinating or paranoia,

[33] Alzheimers association, Alzheimer's disease facts and figures, 2019, Pg. 5

impulsive actions, loss of sympathy and/or problems with movement.[34] Let us then think of resident X again, who is in the latter stages of dementia and under full-time care at a care home. Resident X expresses difficulty speaking and is known for wandering, even late at night, around the premises confused as to where they are, or why they are there.

Under Sartre's understanding of absolute freedom, our situation (which includes the condition of one's body) cannot restrict our freedom. Thus, resident X, regardless of their symptoms, is still absolutely free to constitute their perspective of the world. Of course, their practical freedom is limited, for their body can only do so much for them and they are confined to the premises of the care facility, but this would not inhibit their freedom of thought, according to Sartre. The for-itself, recall, is a relation to the world, that is, our consciousness is aware of the world around us. The world in front of us does exist through our point of view.[35] "To be is to-be-there" that is, there in the world, sitting in the chair or at that table. This is an "ontological necessity" of the *Dasein*.[36] Thus our body (the in-itself), by extension, exists through the point of view of the for-itself. This order is what makes the for-itself a foundation for its own being and thus the body, according to Sartre, is contingent in so far as the for-itself is contingent; that is, "the body is nothing other than the for-itself".[37] The body is the contingent form that is taken up by my for-itself in so far as my for-itself is contingent and thus, even in disability, illness and disease I can choose how to constitute my body, I can surpass it towards my own chosen projects; "I can not be crippled without choosing myself crippled".[38] Thus, resident X is inhibited by their dementia, but they are still absolutely free to constitute how they experience their dementia, whether it be something unbearable, humiliating, intolerable, etc.

[34] National Institute on Aging, What is dementia?, 2022. There are additional symptoms that I have not listed because the symptoms I did list often encompass other symptoms.
[35] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 330
[36] Ibid, Pg. 332
[37] Ibid, Pg. 333
[38] Ibid, Pg. 352

This is problematic for Sartre. Iddo Landau summarises much of the criticisms within the literature perfectly, emphasising Camus critique of the impossibility of total freedom, Walter Kaufmanns critique that Sartre's freedom puts man at odds with the facts of life, and Grossmann's critique that Sartre's view ostracizes the human condition (by which he means Sartre sticks his head in the ground to avoid the problem the human condition presents towards absolute freedom).[39] Many of these criticisms, however, are defended under this distinction between practical and ontological freedom. David Detmer seeks to reinforce that Sartre emphasizes ontological freedom, claiming readers have frequently "ignored this point… [suggesting that Sartre]… doesn't emphasize it sufficiently enough in *Being and Nothingness"*.[40] I claim, however, that Sartre emphasized this point adequately enough, but that it is still insufficient in instances where the body inhibits one's ontological freedom, that is, one's ability to nihilate the world and constitute it in whatever way one chooses.

A number of symptoms present themselves that suggest resident X is not free to constitute themselves when their mental cognition is inhibited. As stated previously, a report by the Alzheimer's association in 2019 explains dementia is a disease that blocks the neural pathways throughout the brain inhibiting many functions of the brain, notable of which, is thoughts. The disease attacks and kills the cells within the neurons resulting in atrophy of the brain. The cells that die cannot be repaired, and thus compromise an individual's brain function.[41] Resident X, then, is not absolutely free ontologically because their thoughts are blocked by the deconstruction of neural pathways within the brain. They cannot process thought. The for-itself, then, is not absolutely free because its ability to nihilate the world can be blocked by the condition of the in-itself. Therefore, the dementia patient cannot choose how to constitute their being-with-the-world. They don't choose themselves as crippled as Sartre suggests; they simply are. Let us look back at the sadist who tortures the Other.

[39] Landau, Sartre's absolute freedom in being and nothingness, 2012, Pg. 465
[40] Detmer, Sartre Explained, 2008, Pg. 115-116
[41] Alzheimers association, 2019, Pg. 5

When the sadist applies red hot pincers to the Others flesh the Other has no freedom to think what they want, for they are forced to confront the pain they are receiving. The only possible project available to them is whether or not they should stop or lessen the sharp pain they are feeling.[42] Thus, although there is still a choice to be made, the tortured individual is not *absolutely* free because their thoughts are limited to the pain. For the tortured Other, the pain that is being inflicted onto their body is not an obstacle that is chosen by their ability to freely choose projects, but rather it is a project forcefully imposed onto them; "the obstacle is not constituted by the project, but the project is constituted by the obstacle".[43]

Sartre attributes the body as a wholly psychic representation of the for-itself transcendence.[44] My consciousness seeks to unite itself not with my body but the body-for-others. The brain, liver, kidneys and other organs that make up my body is not my body as it is for me, but my body as it is for others. I have not and cannot ever see these organs, they are wholly described and attributed to me by others. This means that my body does not appear to me in the midst of the world, but through my own interactions with it and the distance between it and my consciousness. Sartre's claim is that while the body can restrict our practical freedom, it cannot ever restrict this process of the infinite for-itself seeking to represent, or to nihilate, the world. It remains true that we can never have a grasp of the body without a consciousness to recognise it, however, unlike Sartre I argue the body can restrict the consciousness by limiting the range of available projects available to the individual and, in extreme cases such as dementia, the in-itself wholly removes one's ability to choose even within that limited range. Yet, one can never experience the world without a consciousness, and so everything we experience *is* a representation of our consciousness, just as Sartre argues. We can still maintain, then, that the society we find ourselves in is wholly constituted by our for-itself, because the society has no immediate impacts on the body that would limit our

[42] Landau, 2012, Pg. 466
[43] Ibid.
[44] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 329

ontological freedom. In the case of the torture victim, their social situation is caused by the Sadist applying hot pincers onto the Other's body, but what limits the Other's ontological freedom is not the action of the sadist applying the pincers, but the pain that is produced by the pincers on the body. If the Other was to feel no pain from the pincers, then their ontological freedom would not be inhibited. The criticism about absolute freedom, then, only relates to the facticity of our body and not the facticity of our social situation.

Overall, Sartre's notion of absolute freedom cannot be true because it flies in the face of empirical evidence. This is largely because of his emphasis that the for-itself, which is the absolutely free aspect of our human being ontologically. We know this to be false in the case of resident X who suffers severely from dementia and the tortured Other who is receiving excruciating pain onto his body. However, the cases I have presented in which the body restricts freedom are both extreme cases. In the case of the everyday life of an average individual, Sartre's notion of freedom can be enlightening. This is because of his emphasis is not so much on absolute freedom but instead on moral responsibility. Despite freedom being restricted in extreme cases, the anxiety/angst one feels day-to-day because of this moral responsibility basis is very much still present and I hold that Sartre's theory still holds value in tackling this sense of anxiety. Sartre's freedom also has the ability to weed out those attempting to shift the blame of their actions as something other than their free choice, an attribute that makes Sartre's concept of freedom particularly unique. Any adaptation that seeks to maintain this value must account for the restrictions placed on the individual by their body.

3 Understanding health

3.1: World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as "a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".[45] It is this definition that has influenced public health policies across the world. Despite its widescale usage, the definition fails to hold up to any philosophical rigor, and understanding why can help guide us towards a definition of health that we can utilize in our reconceptualization.

Firstly, a 'complete' state of physical, mental, and social well-being makes health something that no one can achieve, for a complete state would mean one without missing components. This would mean a person with a disability, such as possessing only one hand, would be dubbed unhealthy for their physical state is not complete. To deem someone unhealthy because they do not have complete social well-being seems particularly harsh given one cannot control the political injustices or economic frailty that may cause a non-complete social state.[46] Secondly, physical, mental and social states are far too broad resulting in numerous issues; (1) it becomes immeasurable for health practitioners to dictate whether someone is healthy or not because there are simply too many factors to take into account for one's health, and (2) scientists will be unable to compare the health of an individual before and after health intervention, or even compare the health of two individuals.[47] For example, an individual has a mental illness such as depression, it is not immediately clear if the situation is caused by physical, mental or social deficiency and, because the terms are so broad, finding a suitable treatment for that individual can be time-consuming and ineffective. Lastly, WHOs

[45] World Health Organisation, Constitution, 1948
[46] Bickenbach, WHO's definition of health, 2017, Pg. 964
[47] Ibid, Pg. 962

definition implies that health is merely an enjoyable, happy state. This occurs because it utilizes 'well-being', which often refers to a sense of flourishing or happiness. Understanding health in terms of happiness or flourishing is a problem because they are not constant states one can maintain. That's not to say a healthy person can't experience happy moments, but that setting happiness as a goal for one to achieve inevitably sets someone up to be 'unhealthy' because our situations are always changing, and our emotions, including happiness, change with it. Thus, we should seek to define health as something other than happiness.

In the defence of WHOs definition, by encompassing such a general scope of the states it allows certain disabilities, diseases and illnesses to be problematic for more than just one state. Dementia, for example, affects all health states and WHOs definition allows for a health care programme that can be personalized to the individual, which is vital to providing adequate care. We can derive then, that any definition of health should encompass all three states (the physical, mental, and social) to allow for personalization of care in the case of disability, disease, and illness. Also, unlike negative definitions of health which define health as the absence to disease or illness, WHO's definition takes a positive stance, choosing to address health as something in-itself rather as something which exists in the absence of disease or illness. This is valuable precisely because health is a constant state of one's being. Disease and illness are a part of that state, but do not entirely encapsulate it.

We can now establish what is required to make an adequate definition of health. Going forward, a conception of health must (a) be firmly grounded in physiological sciences to allow practitioners to provide suitable and effective treatment; (b) be understood as an attribute of an individual that can be personalized given their specific situation; (c) hold health as a valuable attribute in of itself (and not something alternative such as flourishing or happiness); and (d), allow disease and illness to impact multiple frontiers of an individual's

overall health, not just the physiological.[48] I will now turn my attention to the two dominating philosophical theories of health and assess each of them under these criteria.

3.2: Biostatistical Theory of Health

The Biostatistical Theory of Health (BST) developed by Christopher Boorse defines health as the normal functioning of biological systems; "Health… is normal functional ability: the readiness of each internal part to perform all its normal functions on typical occasions with at least typical efficiency".[49] Boorse uses the example of a peacock's tail, its function is to attract a mate, or the gills of a fish which functions to allow the fish to respire oxygen.[50] Importantly to Boorse the function must always be directed towards a goal, a reason for that function; "individual cells are goal-directed to manufacturing certain compounds; by doing so they contribute to higher-level goals like muscle contraction". The highest functions an organism is functioning towards is the survival of the individual and the survival of the species.[51] Each species has a separate "species design" which appropriate a different functional hierarchy between species. For Boorse, the species design that emerges is an empirical ideal that serves as the basis for health judgements given that particular species.[52] Under this theory of health, an individual is completely healthy if and only if all their organs function normally, that is, they contribute to the survival of the individual or the survival of the species of which that individual belongs to.[53]

When we compare BST to our four criteria it fails to achieve (d) because it attributes any disease or illness to a physiological aspect of an individual's health and only as

[48] Bickenbach, 2017, Pg. 962
[49] Boorse, Health as a theoretical concept, 1977, Pg. 555
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid, Pg. 556
[52] Ibid, Pg. 557
[53] Nordenfelt, The concepts of Health and Illness revisited, 2007, Pg. 7

physiological. It is important that a theory does not do this as is demonstrated by the recent coronavirus pandemic which highlighted that healthy behaviour in one's mental and social lives is crucial to preventing or intervening a disease before it becomes a physiological issue.[54] Also, BST does not always achieve criteria (b), because although treatments and medications can be given to individual's given their specific maladies, it does not always factor in a person's lifestyle to their treatment. For example, a person living in America is prescribed certain tablets to rectify a problem with their liver, but they cannot afford to buy the prescribed drugs, and so the medical treatment is useless to the individuals attempt to remove the malady. Thus, they remain unhealthy.

3.3: Holistic Theories of Health

Holistic Theories of Health (HTH) are an alternative to BST defined by Lennart Nordenfelt. That is, HTH refers to the quality of life of an individual rather than their mere survival.[55] Under this theory of health, an individual is healthy if and only if they have the ability, given standard circumstances, to reach their goals.[56] Nordenfelts version of this theory places heavy importance on an individual's *vital* goals, which are an individual's most essential goals of life. These include their survival and the survival of the species, however, are not limited to them. An individual could have the vital goal of starting a business, for example, and this vital goal, according to Nordenfelt, should be taken into consideration when regarding that individuals health because it affects how they behave. Thus, according to HTH it is not sufficient that you are functionally normal in relation to your survival, but also that you have the resources available to you to achieve other goals.

[54] Saad & Prochaska, A philosophy of health, 2020, Pg. 2
[55] Nordenfelt, 2007, Pg. 6
[56] Ibid, Pg. 7

Both theories share some similarities including an established form of functionalism. For BST the function of cells is to maintain survival whereas in HTH the function of cells would be to give the individual the ability to achieve their final goals.[57] HTH is favourable, however, because unlike BST it achieves criteria (b) and (d), that is, it can be personalized to an individual's specific situation and it allows disease and illness to impact multiple frontiers of an individual's overall health. However, HTH fails to achieve criteria (c) because it favours vital goals, or "value laden functions", over natural functions.[58] This is problematic because it risks not placing intrinsic value on health in-itself but rather our vital goals, potentially disregarding the natural functions of our cells. Thus, going forward, we must find a definition of health that integrates both theories into one in order to meet our criteria. This will also be important for adapting Sartre's theory which, like HTH, places too much emphasis on vital goals, or projects that can be chosen by the individual and not enough emphasis on the natural functions of the body.

3.4: Defining Health

The most convincing alternative is presented by Julian Saad and James Prochaska who argue, under the hopes to redefine WHO's definition, define health as a state of maintainable-ease of functioning that can be observed at the level of the cell, the self and the society.[59] That is, cooperation across each of these observable states is required to allow for maintainable-ease of functioning which is how we can determine if one is healthy or unhealthy. The functioning of each of these states can disrupt another one of the states and vice versa. For example, the self can disrupt the society such as when an individual chooses to have

[57] Nordenfelt, 2007, Pg. 9
[58] Saad & Prochaska, 2020, Pg. 2
[59] Ibid, Pg. 3

unprotected sex with multiple individuals which can lead to epidemics, and the society can disrupt the functioning of self, such as by causing psychological dysfunctions to the individual (e.g. unconscious bias).[60] The same is true for each relationship between each of the states. Saad & Prochaska describe what's known as 'blue zones' which consist of individuals that have enhanced physical longevity and mental well-being. In these zones individuals keep their physical bodies in better shapes by eating healthy and exercising as well as integrating behavioural and social practices, such as prayer, pursuit of purpose, or even humour.[61]

While this definition succeeds in achieving (a), (b), (c) and (d) it is still presented with a problem. Referring to maintainable-ease, the definition seems to consider health as a perpetual cycle of functioning that only considers a person 'healthy' when each of these states are fully maintained. Yet it is impossible to achieve a perfectly maintainable lifestyle because our environment is constantly changing. For example, when a person ages their cells begin to deteriorate. This is a natural phenomenon and it seems rather cruel to suggest that every elderly individual is unhealthy because their cells can no longer maintain ease of functioning. Simone De Beauvoir even discusses this phenomenon in 'the coming of age' referring to the work of Galen who "looked upon old age as something lying between illness and health".[62] In fact, once you begin to apply this criterion to other groups, such as disability, the margin for who is healthy becomes a small minority of people. From an outward perspective in particular, those with disabilities compared from those without would perpetually be in an unhealthy state, for they cannot easily maintain themselves, they must make special accommodations in order to do so. Havi Carel in her book 'Phenomenology of Illness' describes how the outsiders view those with disabilities from always a negative standpoint.[63] She discusses health in the face of well-being which, although we have argued to be inadequate, serves our purposes to

[60] Saad & Prochaska, 2020, Pg. 3
[61] Ibid, Pg. 4
[62] Beauvoir, The coming of age, 1970, Pg. 18
[63] Carel, Phenomenology of Illness, 2016, Pg. 135

show maintainable ease isn't sufficient for defining one as healthy. Carel argues "cultivating well-being within illness and learning to live well with physical and mental constraints requires conscious effort and is an achievement".[64] One can be healthy in so far as they are able to achieve certain goals available to them despite their physical or mental limitations or the perspective of the outsider, who might deem them unhealthy. Thus, we can derive the need for a fifth criteria for an adequate definition of health; (e) it must be achievable for the individual, not necessarily maintainable.

Going forward I will use an adapted form of Saad and Prochaska's definition of health that incorporates achievement rather than maintainable-ease. That is; **health is an adequate level of functioning of an individual's cell, self and societal states that allows them to achieve their vital goals.** This definition maintains criteria (a), (b) and (d) while also accommodating for (e). What does need some clarification, however, is how this definition achieves criteria (c) as it appears to place value on vital goals. Initially it seems that health would only be valuable if an individual's chosen vital goal is to be healthy. The risk, then, remains the same as with HTH in that it potentially disregards the natural functions of our cells. However, I argue that cellular health is constitutive of our other goals, that is, part of achieving any vital goal necessarily includes cellular functioning. Thus, the achievement aspect of my definition is what differentiates it from other HTH theories and what allows me to maintain the important natural function of our cells. If a sprinter would like to achieve any goal of being a sprinter professionally then being healthy is a requirement of that. It varies from regular HTH because HTH doesn't make a constitutive claim about cellular health, thus suggesting vital goals can always over-ride natural functions. My definition does make a constitutive claim. Thus, I will apply this definition of health to Sartre's existentialism with the intent to adapt his theory in a way that will account the criticisms raised in chapter two.

[64] Carel, 2016, Pg. 148-149

4 Being and Health

The claim that Sartre's theory of being and health are related arises through Saad and Prochaska's definition. In their explanation, they claim that the cell, self and societal systems refer to various aspects of our life, their examples included; one's cardiovascular system which impacts their cells, their "personality" which impacts the self and the environment which impacts society.[65] Intuitively, I see a connection between the cell and the in-itself (our body), the self and the for-itself (our personality) and the society and our being-within-the world. Upon defining health in the previous chapter, that intuition goes further with the inclusion of vital goals, which are akin to Sartre's idea of chosen projects. Following this intuition, this chapter will focus on the relationship between health and Sartre. This analysis will begin with the cell, where I will argue that our cellular functions are unchangeable aspects of our being, and thus can constrain our self. I will follow this with a discussion of the self, establishing its existence despite the cellular restraints that are placed on it that suggest otherwise. Briefly I will link the society with Sartre's concept of being-in-the-world, however this relationship is less important to the problems I raised in chapter two and thus I will spend less time discussing it. Following this, completing the relationship between health and Sartre, will be a discussion relating our vital goals to projects. From here I can argue why this adaptation of Sartre's theory is able to maintain its value while not claiming that we are absolutely free beings.

[65] Saad & Prochaska, 2020, Pg. 4, Principle 3d

4.1: The Cell

When referring to the cell I could be mistaken as referring directly to the biostatistical theory of health (BST). That is, an individual's cell state refers to the normal functioning of their biological systems. Some clarification is needed for this because the cell refers solely to the functioning of the body, not necessarily the body as a complete set of organs or limbs. This is because we can entirely conceive of an individual missing a hand, yet their body would still be in a complete state of functioning, thus, their cell state would be healthy. However, referring to BST in this instance would be a mistake because of Boorse's claim that the theory is value-laden free. That is, it is solely based on empirical facts and evidence. This is a mistake, as Kingma highlights, because to define what is a 'normal' function must make reference to some sort of reference class, such as sex or race. Boorse fails to adequately answer what our reference classes should be since there are no empirical facts that can determine which reference class BST should use. This subjectivity can lead to claims such as that homosexuality is a disease because it goes against the 'normal' functions of biological reproductive organs.[66] Our evaluation of the cell, as I will argue later in the chapter, is driven by our vital goals and projects. This means that my cell can be defined as healthy or unhealthy based on my freely chosen vital goals, thus the cell is value-laden.

However, regardless of our vital goals, there are 'vital' organs that are required for any level of achievement of vital projects. We can then encourage reference classes that relate to the individuals chosen goals. For example, an individual with asthma would have a 'normal' speed they can run a 1500m race that differs from individuals without asthma. Although they cannot ever reach the same top speeds as those without asthma, they can still consider themselves healthy in so far as their cellular state allows. They are healthy enough to allow

[66] Kingma, What is to be healthy?, 2007, Pg. 132

them to achieve any other vital goals they may have chosen. Similarly, Saad and Prochaska describe the cell state of human beings as complex and diverse. To them, who hold maintainable-ease to be important to health, the biological immune system is they key system that maintains the functioning of our vital organs and therefore our cell state.[67] My definition does not include maintainable-ease but this difference does not disregard the importance of the biological immune system, for without it the cell states would deteriorate, and an individual would not be able to achieve their vital goals. Thus, we can conclude, similarly to Saad and Prochaska, that the cell state is healthy if it allows the individual to achieve their vital goals. This is why good cellular health is constitutive of any vital goal.

Upon proving Sartre's notion of absolute freedom to be false, we must now reassess what a Being-in-itself is, specifically that of the *Dasein*. The in-itself is what it is.[68] Like how we understand the body as a combination of various organs and systems, Sartre argues the in-itself is solid and can be designated as a synthesis.[69] In this sense, the organs and systems that make up our body cannot be anything than what they are and what they do. The in-itself of the *Dasein* is its cellular systems that allow for the functioning of the body. To a certain extent, we are defined by the capabilities of these systems. Our cellular processes that allow us to function are unchangeable aspects of our facticity. My heart, even though I cannot see it, exists as what it is, and the same applies to all my organs and the cellular processes that operate to allow my body to function. Thus, the cell refers only to facticity of cellular functions. When these cellular functions are inhibited, our freedom becomes inhibited.

This allows us to now define illness as a philosophical concept; *Illness is a state of the cell that inhibits the ontological freedom of the individual to pick their vital goals*. Carel's phenomenology of illness provides a compelling account for this definition. When discussing

[67] Saad & Prochaska, 2020, Pg. 4, Principle 3a
[68] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 22
[69] Ibid.

illness, Carel looks to understand what one loses during times of illness. The most prominent loss, she argues, is the loss of freedom; *"What could once be done unthinkingly with no planning and marginal effort is now an explicit task, requiring thought, attention and pronounced effort… the continuous denigration of freedom is experienced as diminished bodily capacities… but also as a deepening erosion of one's freedom to plan and live"*.[70] Carel's compelling argument clearly shows how illness inhibits ones ontological freedom and suggests that even when one is experiencing a temporary illness, they are experiencing a loss of freedom. We can also distinguish here between disability and illness, which allows us to claim that individuals with a disability remain ontologically free. The paralysed man, for example, is disabled and thus his practical freedom is restricted, but he is not ill and so his ontological freedom is not inhibited. He is still free to think and to nihilate, whereas the dementia sufferer is not.[71] This definition of illness also achieves criteria (d) from the last chapter because this definition includes the state of our cell, the freedom of our self and consequently our ability to engage with society.

The facticity of our cellular functions does affect our freedom and, in extreme cases, can wholly restrict it. Thus, this adaptation of Sartre's notion of the Being-in-itself avoids the criticisms of absolute freedom because it does not hold that the for-itself can be absolutely free in ill-health. However, as noted, it is only in extreme cases where cellular functioning is compromised that our freedom is removed. Some extreme cases appear repairable given the social circumstances one find themselves in. Take for example someone with a heart condition. In modern science, we are able to transplant hearts, presuming that there is both one

[70] Carel, 2016, Pg. 68-69

[71] Some further definitions would have to be established, such as disorders, which I consider to be permanent illnesses. Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), for example, can be described as a "paralysis of the will", thus suggesting the freedom of the individual with ADHD is being inhibited. (Kelly & Ramundo, You mean I'm not lazy, stupid or crazy?!, 1996, Pg. 65). Notably unique about disorders is that although defining it as an 'illness' intuitively suggests the individual is always unhealthy, this is not the case. Rather their cellular state is healthy even with a disorder if their vital goals align with the capabilities of their cell. I will argue this later on.

available and the society one lives in has the infrastructure available to perform such a surgery. However, even in these instances where the condition is repairable, during the duration of the individual's condition, their thoughts will be dictated by this obstacle. Our freedom, then, is not absolute, but this does not mean it does not exist. For the most part, Sartre's notion of the for-itself will still apply in my conception of the self.

4.2: The Self

The self, or the consciousness, is perhaps the most complex aspect of our *Dasein*. It is something (or perhaps better stated as nothing in Sartrean terms) that appears to be the foundation our autonomy, yet it can be inhibited when the functioning of the cell becomes compromised. In the same capacity though, there are conceivable instances in which the self has adequately overridden the functioning of the body. For example, Matthias Steiner was an Olympic weightlifter from Germany who won the gold medal in the 2008 Beijing games. After a number of failures, Steiner won the gold by lifting ten kilograms of weight above his previous successful attempt, outlifting his competitors. He dedicated his win to his wife who had died prior to the games. He had promised her that he would one day win a gold medal in her name. Upon receiving his medal, he claimed "I managed to lift it because I had this strong, innermost urge".[72] An achievement such as this suggests to me that there is a self present within the *Dasein* and one that can autonomously push the cell beyond its regular capabilities. The sceptic might say here that the cell always had the potential to lift the weights, the individual just hadn't yet exploited their full potential. I argue that even if this is true, it proves that we autonomously do exert a certain amount of control over our body and the limits in which it can reach. Sports isn't the only instance where we see signs of this. Suicidal depression is an instance where an

[72]Laureus World Sports Awards Limited, A golden promise, 2020

individual feels so strongly about their desire to die that they intentionally end the functioning of their cells, which goes against any purpose of the functioning.

Another argument can be seen in the phenomena we have between waking and dreaming. I am asleep, dreaming about something, wholly in the moment believing the dream to be reality. It is only when I wake that I realise it was a dream, and have a memory, or at least faded recollection, of that dream. Thus, something must exist to connect them, a link that both the dream and the reality can coincide. Parks suggests that this link is "me-ness", that is, it is me who experienced both the dream and the waking, and it is me that remembers them and thus some part of me who links them.[73] Similarly, Sartre describes this 'my-ness' as a quality that is always present within the structure to which I live, that is, the Being with the world.[74] Thus the self must exist if I am to experience and recall phenomena such as dreams.

For Sartre, the for-itself is what it is not, it is a being of infinite possibilities. This remains the same for my conception of the self. It is true that I can choose to define myself as any one of the infinite possibilities, for example, I could wish to be a rock or a tree. It does not matter to the self that these things are not possible in reality, because the very fact that it can choose to wish to be these things proves the self's infinite nature. Therefore, like Sartre, we can say that the self is what it is not, an infinite possibility of being. Unlike Sartre, however, we do not claim the self to possess absolute freedom. Conceiving of being through health, we view the self not as an individual aspect of being, that can be separable conceptually like Sartre, but instead as apart of being wholly inseparable from one another part of being. That is, we cannot even conceptually say that the self exists without the cell because by nature it must exist with these other aspects of being if it is to exist at all. Thus, the self is limited by the state of our cellular functioning and not absolutely free. To say otherwise would be to deny the structure of our being.

[73] Parks, Out of my head, 2018, Pg. 4.
[74] Sartre J. P., 1943, Pg. 128. I will discuss this further in section 4.3.

The realisation that one's freedom is infinite, yet not absolute, is often a phenomenon that takes people by surprise. In her book 'The coming of Age', Beauvoir discusses the alienation one feels when they grow old. For her, one does not ever realize themselves to be old, they only notice such when they are told by another that they are old. This relation is one of alienation, an experience of our body as something other than ourselves.[75] This phenomenon is caused by an individual wishing themselves to be something that they can never be, that is, the young self they see themselves as, the individual they used to be in their younger years. It is not a phenomenon only experienced by the elderly. It is entirely possible to experience this phenomenon at a young age, and many who have suffered severely ill health (whether it be their own or that of a loved one) will have also experienced this phenomenon. It is the moment in which an individual realises they cannot entirely transcend themselves. One realises that the self has infinite possibility to want to be whatever it is not, but is not absolutely free to choose any of those possibilities.

Although we cannot ever wholly transcend our cellular functions, this does not stop us to some degree transcending our situations. That is, we are able to transcend our body to the extent that our cells allow us to and remove ourselves from a social situation we find ourselves in. Our cells are the only aspect of our being that has the capability to wholly restrict our self and therefore our freedom. Thus, I can maintain, like Sartre, that our society and environment never restrict our ability to transcend our being and therefore can never restrict our self. This is not to downplay the psychological impacts the society can have on an individual, I only suggest that we have the ability to overcome it whereas we cannot ever overcome a failure of cellular functioning. The only complete restriction to the self, and therefore our freedom, is the cellular processes within the body. Further research of the self should seek to establish some pressing questions that arise from this discussion, such as; to what extent does the bodies cellular

[75] Lennon & Wilde, Alienation and Affectivity, 2019, Pg. 36

processes control the self? Or, does the development of our brain impact the ability of our self to impact the actions of our body?[76] Regardless of these questions, I suggest that the self does indeed exist, and that it is largely similar to Sartre's notion of the for-itself with the exception that it is not absolutely free.

4.3: The Society

It is in our social state that we can address the second part of our facticity, that is, the changeable aspects of our Being. The term social state should not be taken merely as a narrow understanding of the political and economic society we find ourselves in. Rather it should be understood in more broad terms. It should also include one's friends, family, the general environment, such as it's climate or landscape. Not excluded from this is also our external body, by which I mean features of our body not essential to our cellular functioning. Our limbs, for example, we use during our daily activities, but they are not required for adequate functioning of the cells. The reason to make this distinction is because if we include the external body within our definition of what is healthy at a cellular level, we are immediately segregating a large group of individuals from ever being able to achieve a healthy state. For example, an individual who has lost a leg would never be able to achieve good health if we included the external body. Also, these aspects of our body are changeable without affecting our cellular functions, such as when one gets plastic surgery. The society, then, should be understood more broadly as a term to mean any part of our facticity that is changeable through our actions and the actions of others within the world. This, I will argue, is directly

[76] My initial inclination to this question is yes it can. Take the case of the dementia patient for example. The brain has slowly deteriorated and one side effect of this is loss of motor control, as well as unpredictable mood swings. What results is the individual's inability to control their own actions.

correlated to Sartre's interpretation of Being-within-the-world and is why his philosophy is still valuable to us despite my earlier criticisms.

Illnesses, as discussed earlier, is a state of the cell that inhibits our freedom. However, if the Coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it is that the social state one is present in can often have a great impact on their cellular states. During the times of the pandemic, where you lived often increased or decreased your risk of contracting the virus, and even those who were never infected still had to take precautions and actions to protect themselves and others. Thus, there is a compelling argument to suggest that one's social state does affect an individual's freedom because it clearly has a significant impact on an individual's health. However, while we can argue that all would have had their practical freedom inhibited, only those who were infected would have had their ontological freedom inhibited. Even in a situation where people are affected by social policies, it is clear that these policies do not restrict the individual's freedom of ontological choice, hence why some individuals act against the policies and laws. The same applies to any of our social situations, it is only when the individual becomes ill that their ontological freedom is restricted.

The relationship with Sartre's concept of being with others within the world, then, is relatively simple. Like Beauvoir's response to Merleau-Ponty, our consciousness is not entirely in control of the way in which our perception of the world is altered by our experience, however, this perspective only ever restricts our practical freedom. I cannot experience something that does not occur around me, but I am still free to think about that experience, to try and conceive of what it might be like. Thus, while the society can greatly impact our actions, it does not inhibit our freedom like the cellular state does.

4.4: Vital goals and Projects

The final aspect from our definition of health is: 'allows them to achieve their vital goals'. This is directly correlated with Sartre's notion of chosen projects. A vital goal, as is a project, is a chosen objective we set that helps us nihilate the world. In the case of health, the chosen project defines what is and is not healthy for that individual. For example, if my vital goal was to be a sprinter, I would be unhealthy if I weighed two-hundred kilograms, but if my vital goal was to be a wrestler, two-hundred kilograms would be a healthy weight. The pressing question that arises from this is, how do I choose the right vital goals? The question is raised because it is entirely plausible that an individual picks a bad vital goal which could thus lead them into being unhealthy individuals. This can occur in one of two ways, either the individual (a) chooses a vital goal too easy to achieve, or (b) they choose a vital goal too difficult to achieve, if not impossible.

Let's examine case (a) and (b) more closely through the lens of age. In the case of (b), the individual thinks they can continue on with their lives achieving all the same goals as they could before, inevitably falling short of those goals when they grow older. This is often the case with ageing as Beauvoir discusses. It is always the Other who recognises us as old, and this is because we only ever see ourselves as our greatest achievements, and what we still believe we can do. This attitude towards aging, as something halfway between illness and health, results in the aging person to adopt a point of view of someone who is still young, and thus their vital goals do not adapt to their cellular states capabilities.[77] This is a common phenomenon particularly among the elderly. Individuals believe they can do simple tasks, such as walking to their bedroom, without aid and insisted upon it. However, upon attempting the walk, they always require the aid of a wheelchair, which often upsets the individual. (a) occurs because an

[77] Beauvoir, 1970, Pg. 284-286

individual is denying that they can do more than they are, instead opting to believe their cellular state is in a worse condition than it actually is. In early stages of dementia, an individual still retains certain capabilities to choose but in example (a) they may act as if that choice is entirely taken away from them, citing their dementia as the reason they can't do certain tasks, tasks that they still could do if only they were willing. They choose to believe that they are incapable of doing anything, insisting that others should do certain activities for them. Such a state is self-serving and results in the individual treating others as if they are objects to be utilised, denying that they possess a self.

Setting adequate vital goals and fundamental projects that are both achievable, yet also push the individual to do the most that they can, is difficult and many fall into bad faith because their vital goals do not do this. To be an authentic person one would have to find a balance of chosen goals that benefits their health in the most positive way possible. Further research should aim to answer how we decide which vital goals are worth pursuing, however, for this thesis, it satisfies that there is a direct relationship between health and its vital goals with Sartre's conception of chosen projects.

4.5: Bad faith and Authenticity Revisited

What is attractive about the concept of freedom in general is the emphasis it places on the moral responsibility of the individual for their actions. What is unique about Sartre's concept of freedom is its ability to seek out acts of unfreedom that people regularly miss in their daily lives. Particularly, Sartre's concept roots out even those who think they are thinking freely, that is, the champions of sincerity. Thus, if this interpretation of Sartre's work seeks to be a true adaption, it needs to maintain this ability to seek out acts of unfreedom. That is, it needs to be able to establish when an individual is in bad faith and when they are being

authentic. I must approach this, however, differently to the way I have approached the rest of the thesis. I have criticized Sartre and developed my argument from the perspective of the ill person, that is, the person suffering from a loss of freedom, such as the dementia sufferer. We must now approach it from the perspective of the healthy individual, whose freedom is not restricted by an illness.

To recall, bad faith for Sartre is the denial of one's transcendence and the denial of one's facticity. One does this to avoid the existential angst that is realised when one is absolutely free. This conception of Sartre's work is still able to maintain this notion of angst because the individual who is free of illness still possesses infinite freedom. The healthy person's freedom is not restricted and so they maintain the freedom to choose any vital goal and act towards those goals. Firstly, one is in bad faith when they deny their transcendence, denying that they are anything more than their facticity and thus they push all responsibility away from themselves and onto forces out of their control. This reliance on facticity is easier to distinguish when an individual is denying changeable aspects of their Being, that is, their social situation. What is less clear is when an individual wholly engages with the facticity of their cellular state. The cellular state can restrict an individual's freedom, but to what extent depends on the condition of the cellular state. In the case of dementia, for example, we can deduct that the cellular processes are greatly inhibited, and so too is freedom. There are times where this can be recognised by the other, such as with old age. However, it is less obvious for the Other with regards to certain illnesses. Breathlessness, for example, is an experience felt greatly by the individual, but from the perspective of the Other it is not clear how much this breathlessness is actually affecting the individual. This area of confusion is made worse by cases such as the placebo effect, in which a person's health improves despite treatment that intentionally has no effect on the individual. From the perspective of the Other, then, we can only claim an individual is in bad faith when they wholly commit themselves to their society. Detecting bad faith when an individual wholly commits themselves to their cellular state is less

clear for the average person and the opinion of medical professionals are perhaps the most accurate way of determining if someone is in bad faith or not.

Secondly, an individual is in bad faith when they deny their facticity, wholly commit themselves to their self state. This form of bad faith remains the same as how Sartre describes it in Being and Nothingness. That is, they deny any attention to the truth of their situation preferring to pretend that what is happening is in fact not happening. The clear example of this is the woman on a date, who constitutes the man's approaches as devoid of any sexual intent, instead pretending that what he sees in her is something more than her body.

For the healthy individual, then, Sartre's concept of freedom remains valuable as it allows us to identify acts of unfreedom that individuals engage with both in their denial of transcendence or facticity. It is also valuable to the ill person because it allows them to adjust their vital goals in accordance with the illness they have, which allows them to maximise their potential in spite of their illness. Thus, conceiving of freedom through health accounts for critiques about freedom being absolute while maintaining the value of Sartre's unique conception of freedom.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that Sartre's theory of freedom is fundamentally wrong in that it is not absolute. This is because when one's cellular state is compromised, they cannot process ontological thought, and thus, cannot make wholly free choices. However, using the philosophy of health, I have provided an alternative adaptation which accounts for the restrictions on the cell while also maintaining the value we gain from Sartre's work.

Firstly, Sartre argues that we are absolutely free because our for-itself is what it is not, and thus there is an infinite amount of possibilities available to it. We are absolutely free to

choose any one of the possibilities which comes to constitute who we are as individuals, that is, existence precedes essence. This absolute freedom only applies to our ontological being and is not to be mistaken with our practical freedom, which is restricted by our facticity. Regardless of our facticity, we are absolutely free to nihilate the world in front of us however we choose to. That is why the crag can appear to us differently through different perspectives. To one individual, the crag is something to be scaled, but to others it is a thing of beauty. The way we choose to view the crag is an absolutely free choice. Throughout this thesis, however, I have argued that this concept of freedom as absolute is wrong because it flies in the face of empirical evidence. In instances where the body is inhibited, such as dementia, we can reasonably claim we are not absolutely free because the facticity of our body is an obstacle our thoughts are forced to confront, not obstacles chosen by the infinite for-itself. One might argue here that this is a limit on our practical freedom, as illness only limits the range of choices available to us, not the ability to choose itself. However, I argue it affects our ontological freedom as well because when someone is severely ill, such as the dementia sufferer, they are not able to process the choices available to them, their self cannot nihilate the world and thus the *Dasein* is not free because they cannot even choose from the choices available to them.

Despite our freedom not being absolute when our body is inhibited, there is still value in Sartre's work. That is, his ability to root out acts of unfreedom in which an individual attempts to shift moral responsibility of their actions onto something out of their control. Seeing this value we can adapt Sartre's concept of freedom from the perspective of health, and doing so allows us to maintain this value. I defined health as an adequate level of functioning of an individual's cell, self and societal states that allows them to achieve their vital goals. Conversely illness is defined as a state of the cell that inhibits the ontological freedom of the individual to pick their vital goals. The definition of health is able to adapt Sartre's theory because it references each key aspect of Sartre's theory of being and freedom, that is; the cell

refers to the in-itself of the Dasein, the self refers to the for-itself, our society refers to our being-with-others in the world and finally our vital goals refer to chosen projects. By splitting the facticity of the *Dasein* conceptually between the cell and the society we are able to decipher what is and is not a denial of one's facticity without maintaining that freedom is absolute. The largest change to Sartre's theory occurs in the cell, in which I concluded that the facticity of our cellular functions do affect our freedom. The case of dementia is a clear-cut example of this, for the illness causes the degeneration of the brain, which inhibits the individual's ability to think. It is not so clear cut in examples such as breathlessness or the tortured Other, however we can conclude that both of these are also instances that ontological freedom is restricted because when a person suffers in this way the object of their thought is forced onto them, they do not choose it as an object to overcome as Sartre suggests.

This theory is able to maintain the value of Sartre because it still allows us to identify acts of unfreedom that individuals engage with. When one denies their facticity, which sometimes can be harder to establish without a medical professional, they live in bad faith just as when one denies that they possess a self. Often this is most detectable by the individual's choice of vital projects which are set either too high, making them impossible to achieve, or too low, making them too easy to achieve. We are able to choose any projects we want just as Sartre suggests with his example of the crag, except for when a project is forced onto us in ill health. Importantly, illness does not mean an individual is inauthentic. Instead, my adaptation of his theory allows for the ill person to remain authentic despite their cellular state inhibiting their freedom if they adapt their vital goals to the circumstances of their illness. Thus, through the perspective of health, we are able to maintain the value of Sartre while arguing that we are not absolutely free.

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